

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTRIBUTION OF INTEGRATING SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE INTO ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The study is intended to explore the contributions of integrating spiritual intelligence into leadership development practice in higher educational institutions from the perspective of academic leadership. This will lead to the development of more holistic leaders well-appointed to face with the challenges in 21st century. As such the study will be accomplished through the investigation of the lived experience of academic leaders in higher education institutions who have number of experience with the higher educational structures and policies and also vast knowledge in the field of spirituality and leadership. Qualitative interview will be conducted with academic Deans working in public universities in order to explore the contributions of integrating spiritual intelligence into their field. The interviews will be intended to focus on how the interviewees conceptualize spiritual intelligence and how it is being infused in higher educational environment. Interview questions will be prompted in order to know the interviewee's personal experience based on their influence and involvement with spiritual intelligence practice into their professional and academic work.

Keywords : spiritual intelligence, academic leadership, higher education institutions

Background and problem statement

In 21st century management experts agree that leadership is the number one strategic concern of business (Lussier, 1997). Kets de Vries (2001) agreed this statement by mentioning that the effectiveness of an organisation's employees, who are in leadership position, will determine how the organisation will perform. In addition, change has lead towards different leadership process, responsibilities and skills in order to be equipped with different challenges and demand. In such case the traditional leaders operating in mechanical paradigm seems to fail towards addressing escalating 21st century organisational conditions and existential concerns. There are many studies have stated that leadership effectiveness in changing environment context is under severe threat and as such leaders will have to be equipped differently in order to be able to deal with the challenges in a more effective strategy (Dotlich, D.L., Cairo ,P.C., Rhinesmith , S.T (2006) , Groothof (2007) and Van der Marwe and Vervev (2007).

There is growing evidence that current leadership development constructs and practices are incomplete in which there is missing elements. As a result of this gap, leadership development in general, is producing incomplete leaders who are not equipped to deal with the organisational challenges of the 21st century. A new dimension of leadership paradigm is thus needed in the crisis of leadership being faced throughout the human society. Corporate and public leadership face the need for a dramatic rise in their thinking about the structure and leadership of organizations. Without clearly recognizing it, corporate and public leaders are challenged by external forces to build a radically new leadership culture from the ground up (Zohar and Marshall 2000). Today's leader need to be more proficient in their ability and flexibility and creatively adapt to and transform the rapidly changing complex system they work in. Fry and Slocum (2008) supported that statement saying that one of the greatest challenges facing leaders is the need to develop new business model that accentuate ethical leadership, employee well-being, sustainability , and social responsibility without sacrificing profitability , revenue growth and other indicators of financial performance). At present most of the leadership development models, programs and framework tend to emphasize on intelligent quotient (IQ), little on Emotional Quotient (EQ), and lack of spiritual intelligence (SQ). Although one-dimensional approach may have worked in simpler time, in an environment of moral complexity and rapid shift in attitudes, social and political circumstances, economic condition, and technology, it is essential that leaders be able to use their heart, head and guts as situation demand (Dotlich et al.2006).

Danah Zohar (2005) claimed that in our world today, the things that we are most lacking is visionary leadership due to the value that society places on one particular kind of capital that is material capital. She added that in order for leadership to inspire long-term, sustainable enterprises, it needs to pursue two other form of capital as well which are social and spiritual. In another statement Fry (2003) specified that in order for modern organisation to be able to adapt to today's rapidly changing environment and become learning organisations, they should rely on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation.

Whereas cognitive intelligence and expert knowledge enables leaders to lead within a controllable environment of restricted complexity and low insecurity, EI are required when dealing with increasingly complex environment , however in order to be able to provide leadership in highly complex and uncertain environment leaders additionally needs SQ or spiritual intelligence, the leadership skills to help discover meaning and to help create new and valuable environment . IQ and EQ seems to be insufficient to enable leaders to lead sensibly the changes inherent in complex adaptive organisations (Aram and Noble , 1999 ; Jafari , 2003 ; Ruuska and Vartainen , 2003. In addition in spite of many studies which have been conducted on leadership, however very little insufficient study done on the strategies and contributions of infusing spirituals intelligence practice into leadership development towards managing the highly competitive environment.

Spiritual intelligence according to Zohar (2005) is being considered the ultimate solution towards managing turbulent time organization facing due to massive changes as it provide the enduring values Spiritually intelligent leaders will be able to lead the way towards creating and implementing new vision by transcending traditional frameworks and by finding new meaning for activities at any level (Zohar & Marshal ; Jafari 2003 ; Mengel et al. 2004). Study by Von Eck Vervey (2007) concluded that organisation that looks for leaders who can successfully lead people through change and uncertainty should now look for spiritual intelligence in addition to cognitive and emotional intelligence. Thus, implementing spiritually intelligent leader will be able to lead the way to creating and implementing new visions by transcending traditional framework and by finding new meaning for activities , projects and programs on any level (Zohar & Marshall 2001 ; Jafari, 2003; Mengel et al.2004).

Research questions

The study intended to explore the perspective of academic leaders on spiritual intelligence and the application into academic leadership development practice in higher educational institution. Specifically the study intended to answer the following questions:

1. How academic leaders conceptualize spiritual intelligence?
2. What will be the contribution of spiritual intelligence practice for academic leadership development?
3. What are the dimensions of spiritual intelligence that will contribute towards effective leadership development and practice?
4. What are the strategies that can be implemented to integrate spiritual intelligence into academic leadership practice?

Purpose of the study

In light of the above the main purpose of the study is to explore the concept of spiritual intelligence and its integration into academic leadership development in order to develop more holistic leaders who will be equipped for challenges of 21st century. Spiritual intelligence will assist leaders towards an understanding of effective methods of managing employees in turbulent times and thus providing greater sense of meaning and purpose at the working atmosphere.

Significance of the study

As the existing knowledge the study will contribute by conducting an in depth study into everyday experiences and perspectives of academic leaders accounts on the current review of spiritual intelligence concept and leadership development practice specifically in higher educational learning. As such the study will be proposed to improve the concept of spiritual intelligence and the importance of its practice for leadership in transforming era. Appropriate

model for spiritual intelligence and leadership will as well assist towards improving the body of knowledge. From the practical perspective the theory and model of spiritual intelligence and leadership practice and the themes obtained serve as an input for designing and facilitating of intervention for professional academic leaders, academicians and change agent to understand and analyse the characteristics of personal and organizational situation in order to contribute to the long run survival of the higher educational learning institutions. This will also assist towards addressing the concern that current leadership development practices product partial or incomplete leaders.

Literature review

Emmons (2000) defined spiritual intelligence as the adaptive use of spiritual information to facilitate everyday problem solving and goal attainment. Intelligence is the implementation of a set of tools to arrive at a more productive, effective, happier, and ultimately more meaningful life. Responding to Emmons' challenge , in their book on the subject '*SQ: Connecting with our Spiritual Intelligence*' (2000) Zohar and Marshall claimed Spiritual intelligence as the ultimate intelligence and define it as "the intelligence with which we solve and address problems of meaning and value, the intelligence with which we can place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer meaning giving context, the intelligence with which we can assess that one course of action or one life path is more meaningful than another" (2000). .

Spiritual intelligence according to King (2008) is a set of mental capabilities which contribute to the awareness , integration , and adaptive application of the nonmaterial and transcendent aspect of one's existence , leading to such outcomes as deep existential reflection , enhancement of meaning , recognition of a transcendent self , and mastery of spiritual states" (2008 , p.56). The are four components in King's SQ model which include : a) Critical Existential Thinking (CET) b) Personal Meaning Production (PMP) c) Transcendental Awareness (TA) d) Conscious State Expansion (CSE).

The interest in spiritual intelligence focuses the leaders towards building an environment of respect, ethics, values and integrity (Wolf, 2004). The term spiritual leadership came into the light in the new paradigm due to the age of spirituality, the globalization of the work place, and the change in employee demographics. Indeed many studies have been done pertaining to the interest in the application of spirituality to work, organizations, and leadership (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Cavanagh, 1999; Creighton, 1999; Fairholm, 1996; Fry, 2003, 2005; Loehr & Schwartz, 2001; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Solomon & Hunter, 2002; Wheatley, 1999, 2002). Spiritual intelligence is ability to construct meaning through intuitively seeing interconnectedness between life-world experience and the inner spheres of the individual psyche (Rogers, 2003; Yang, 2006). Tisdell (2003) contends that spirituality is an important part of the human experience, which is fundamental to understanding how individuals construct meaningful knowledge. As such it is important for leaders to enlighten themselves with the spiritual intelligence qualities as it can be cascaded to the employees throughout the organization. For leaders to facilitate meaning making as a spiritual experience, they must be able to recognize as well as honour the cultural diversity of the organization in order to create an organizational culture of shared vision (Owens & Valesky, 2007).

The transformational effect of spiritual leadership can result in positive moral behavior of the members of the organization (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Dvir et al., 2002). Literature saying that spiritually intelligence leadership will be able to experience and mobilize meaning based on an understanding of existential questions, sense of purpose, and a call for service would tie in to the leader's role in setting a purpose and mobilizing meaning for their organization (Bass, 1990, 1997, 2001; Bennis, 2000, 2001, 2007; Fry, 2003, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 1992, 2005, 2006; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Spiritually intelligent leaders would engage in their job motivated by rewards that go beyond financial and status considerations but rather view their work through a sense of purpose and a call for service. The leader's meaning-making ability also relates to one of Bennis (2000) key leadership abilities pertaining to the management of meaning and to Kouzes and Posner's (2005) practice of inspiring a shared vision.

Methodology of study

The main purpose of the study is to explore and understand the concept of spiritual intelligence from academic leadership perspective and to understand the significance of practicing it in Higher Educational Institution. The study is specifically concern with the leader's experience on the spiritual intelligence as an important element that should be given priority in changing atmosphere at workplace.

The study will be based on qualitative as it is an attempt to understand human experience. Thus the qualitative study will be useful in order to get more responses from the interviewees on the phenomena of spiritual intelligence practice in higher educational institution. The ultimate goal of the study is to investigate the perspective of academic leaders on spiritual intelligence and the effectiveness of implementing it into in higher educational institution. Public Higher educational institutions in Malaysia will be utilized in order to gain information. The type of qualitative investigation that will be pursued in the study will be phenomenology due to, the experience of participants and their perceptions on spiritual intelligence and its implementation.

In this study the participant will be selected through purposeful sampling, which consists of the Academic leaders working Malaysian Public Universities. The leaders mentioned will be Deans in Public Higher Education Malaysia whom have self-recognized spiritual intelligence experience in their leadership context and also will be able to describe and explain those experiences. Also they should have experience of being leaders in the academic fields for more than 3 years. Six Deans from Malaysian Public Universities will be selected in order to collect data. Academic leaders, especially Deans are considered to be key person in the higher educational institutions towards making important contributions on the human capital performance. Their unique experience will be assumed to contribute to the understanding of the essence of the phenomena as it shows the experiences, their reflection and their own meaning making of the spiritual intelligence and their own meaning making of the spiritual intelligence.

Semi structured interview and open ended questions will be used based on interview guideline to obtain the data. Non-directive style of interviewing using open-ended questions will be used to allow the participants the freedom to control pacing and subject matter of the interview. Directive style of questioning will be used as well in order to obtain more clarification of information that the participants will be providing and all the information will be recorded.

The audio-taped interviews will be transcribed in order to analyse the data collected. All similar themes will be categorised and given a title. The audio-taped interviews will be transcribed verbatim based on certain guidelines. Significant statements and phrases pertaining to the phenomenon will be extracted from each transcript. The meanings will be formulated and organized into themes. Description of the lived experience will be developed after that. Validation will be requested from the participants to compare the researcher's descriptive results with their lived experiences.

In order to check the accuracy of the finding qualitative validity will be used in order to check the accuracy of the findings. Credibility will be applied through member checking by sending participants their transcript for review and verification and also to ensure that each participant will agree with their transcript. In additional the data analysis will be scrutinized and validated by supervisor and committee members.

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